

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 1977, the 1996 Interior appropriations bill. Last year I supported important legislation, signed into law by President Clinton, increasing payment in lieu of taxes [PILT] by more than 100 percent over 5 years to counties which have Federal land holdings in their jurisdiction. However, the 1996 House Interior appropriations bill does not appropriate the funds necessary to implement the phased-in increase to PILT payments passed by Congress.

The purpose of last year's PILT legislation was to give additional help to counties who suffer lost tax revenue from the presence of Federal lands. The PILT program provides financial stability and opportunities for our counties which would otherwise be left without sufficient tax revenue. However, for many years these payments were not allowed to grow with inflation. In recognizing the importance and success of the PILT program, Congress made a commitment to allow for a substantial increase in these payments, an increase many counties were expecting and relying upon to provide the basic services which they deliver.

Several counties in the 19th Congressional District, which I am proud to represent, rely greatly on the PILT program. Johnson, Hardin, and Pope counties are all home to the Shawnee National Forest, and without an increase in PILT assistance, I am afraid they will be forced to face some very difficult times. It is unfair that these counties should have to suffer financially simply because they are home to one of our national forests. I believe this is a case when Government has a responsibility to provide necessary and fair compensation to counties with federally owned lands.

I have long supported efforts to balance the Federal budget, and I recognize the fact that balancing the budget will require some tough choices. However, I do not agree we should back away from providing much needed financial assistance to our counties and communities in order to pay for a package of tax cuts, many of which affect only upper-income individuals and corporations. The truth is, Congress can balance the budget, but not on the backs of those who sincerely need the help of Government.

In closing, I urge the bill's conferees to include the necessary funding to implement the increase in PILT funding as prescribed by Congress and the President. Without the inclusion of an increase in PILT funding to reflect the promise Congress made to many of our counties across this Nation, I am afraid I will be unable to support the conference report.

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this motion. I joined in voting for the patent moratorium when the Interior appropriations bill was on the House floor, and I intend to press for retaining the moratorium when we meet in conference with the other body.

The time has long since come for reforming the obsolete mining law of 1872. Just this week, we had another reminder of how outdated that law is when Secretary Babbitt was forced to give a foreign mining company ownership of 110 acres of Federal lands containing an estimated billion dollars' worth of minerals—for which the company paid just \$275.

Let me repeat: under the mining law of 1872, the Federal Government was forced to sell lands with a billion dollars worth of minerals for the grand total of \$275, with no provision for the taxpayers—the owners of the Fed-

eral lands—to get any royalties, of the kind that are routinely paid in connection when these kinds of minerals are developed on other lands.

So, the current situation is bad. But it would be even worse except for the fact that the Interior appropriation bill for the current fiscal year included a partial patent moratorium—that is, a partial moratorium on land sales under the 1872 Act. The effect of that moratorium is to reduce the number of such unfair, budget-busting sales, and so to protect the taxpayers while Congress works to reform the mining law.

In the last Congress, in addition to the partial moratorium, both the House and the Senate passed bills to replace this obsolete mining law with a modern statute. Unfortunately, however, the conferees were unable to reach agreement on a final version. So, the reform job remains unfinished.

We need to keep working on this. And we need to renew the moratorium, to continue protecting the taxpayers in the meantime. That's why the House was right to adopt the Klug-Rahall amendment—the amendment to renew the moratorium—when the 1996 Interior appropriations bill was on the floor. And that's why we should adopt this motion to instruct, in the interests of protecting the taxpayers and advancing the process of reform.

Mr. YATES. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. YATES].

The motion to instruct was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees: Messrs. REGULA, MCDADE, KOLBE, SKEEN, and Mrs. VUCANOVICH, and Messrs. TAYLOR of North Carolina, NETHERCUTT, BUNN of Oregon, LIVINGSTON, YATES, DICKS, BEVILL, SKAGGS, and OBEY.

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 2002, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 2002) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies

for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, with Senate amendments thereto, disagree to the Senate amendments and agree to the conference asked by the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT CONFEREES OFFERED BY MR. COLEMAN

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to instruct.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. COLEMAN moves that in resolving the differences between the House and Senate, the managers on the part of the House at the conferees on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the bill, H.R. 2002, be instructed to provide funding for the Federal-Aid Highways Program at a level which is as close as possible to the level in the House-passed bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas [Mr. COLEMAN] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. WOLF] will each be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COLEMAN].

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

My motion to instruct conferees is very straightforward. It simply instructs the House conferees to agree to provide funding for the Federal aid highways program at a level that is as close as possible to the \$18 billion provided in the House-passed bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the motions offered by the gentleman from Texas. As the gentleman already pointed out, the House bill provides \$18 billion for the Federal air highway program, an increase of \$840 million over the previous fiscal year. Under this, most States get more than they did in the past.

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The Senate alternatively has elected to reduce highway spending to \$17 billion, \$1 billion below the House level and \$160 million below last year's level. The Federal-Aid Highway Program consists of several programs designed to aid in the construction, rehabilitation, traffic management, and safety of our Nation's highways.

These programs also assist in the improvement of other modes of transportation, so it is my hope that the committee conference can agree to provide the funding for the Federal-Aid Highway Program at a level which is as close as possible to the level of the House-passed bill, realizing the competing needs of the Coast Guard and others.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas. As the gentleman has already pointed out, the House bill provides \$18 billion for the Federal-Aid